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TITLE : **"FREEDOM FROM FOREIGN DOMINATION: A POST-INDEPENDENCE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE"**

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ABSTRACT:

In this paper, I would like to discuss the experience of the Philippines in the process of obtaining freedom from its colonizers (Spain, 1521-1898; United States, 1898-1946). The paper aims to show that a "colonial mentality" may develop as a result of years of dominance from foreign aggressors.

I would like to argue that in any international campaign for freedom, the masses need to be actively involved and educated, to be mobilized and informed of the "struggle," so as to instill in them a sense of nationalism and allow participation rather than encourage dependency to foreign support and powerlessness towards foreign aggressors. Through a process of conscientization, "colonial mentality" may be minimized.

The effects of foreign domination in the Philippines did not end after independence. After many years, local culture still manifests foreign influence, as the people assimilated ways and had developed

attitudes in their cultural transformation as a result of the country's colonial history.

DRAFT:

FREEDOM FROM FOREIGN DOMINATION: A POST-INDEPENDENCE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE

by

Susan D. Tamondong

> "Political independence is not the end, but only the beginning, and in another sense, not an end in itself, but only the means to an end."
>
> Claro M. Recto

> "For no nation is worth anything unless it has learned how to suffer and how to die."
>
> Manuel L. Quezon

INTRODUCTION

The brutal exigences of a fight for national independence forces an articulation of values that otherwise remain dormant. The struggle is a catalyst requiring decisions of life and death, sacrifice or self-interest, allegiance or treason - a test for nationalism. The success

and failure are both manifest not only for the generation enduring the conflict but for subsequent generations who would reap the fruits of independence. Nations surviving the ordeal of obtaining freedom have lived through their finest hour and may turn to ~~its~~ their past to find cohesion and to articulate national identity.

The purpose of this paper is to share an experience of a country, ~~who~~ which has undergone a long struggle for independence, ~~who~~ which finally obtained it, and after over fifty years, is still in the process of rediscovering its own national identity which had been heavily influenced by its colonizers. The Philippines fought against three foreign aggressors: the Spaniards (1521-1898), the Americans (1898-1946) and the Japanese during World War II. I would like to focus on the role of the first two, and how colonial mentality[1] took shape as a result of subjugation. I hope that the East Timorese people may learn something from this experience, and would stand firm in their current struggle for independence.

Recognizing that the role of foreign power is crucial, just as strong local leadership is critical, I would like to argue that in any international campaign for

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[1] Colonial mentality is associated with the feeling of inferiority towards the colonizers, as a result of many years of subjugation. It is a consequence of subliminal conditioning where the colonizers appear superior in all aspects.

freedom and independence, the masses need to be actively involved and informed in order to encourage participation rather than powerlessness and to discourage dependence on external support for the liberation of their country.

For such kind of dependence could create colonial mentality.

THE SPANISH PERIOD

With neighboring Muslim countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, the Philippines is predominantly Catholic, inheriting its Christian religion from the Spaniards who colonized the country in 1521. The ensuing 300 years after Ferdinand Magellan's[2] historic landing in Cebu, the Philippines was under Spanish rule. Revolutionary underground movements existed and attempted to overthrow the colonizers but it was not until the Americans' arrival when they joined forces with the Filipinos that major battle was won against the Spaniards in 1898. The Americans claimed victory in liberating the Filipinos from Spain, despite an earlier proclamation of independence[3] by the revolutionaries two years earlier.

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[2] Ferdinand Magellan was a Portuguese navigator carrying a Spanish flag, and reached the shores of the Philippines on his way to the Moluccas in search of spices. He was killed in a battle by a Filipino warrior, Lapu-Lapu.

[3] The first proclamation of Philippine Independence was held in 1896 by the revolutionaries under a provisional underground government in Biak-na-Bato.

When war broke out between Spain and the United States, the Spanish Governor General proclaimed that the Americans were attempting to substitute the Protestant faith for the Catholic one and tried to use religion to gain support from the Filipinos. The Spanish authorities were using loyalty to the Church as their last card to secure aid, but the Christian ties between Spain and the Philippines was no guarantee of the latter's support in the conflict with the US. The Filipinos took advantage of this conflict to emancipate themselves from Spain.

The Philippine Revolution against Spain was "an attempt at social reformation."[4] a critical attitude towards the Catholic Church was inevitable because the Church was intimately associated with the political machinery of the Spanish administration in the Philippines and it had intertwined closely with the social fabric of the Filipino people. In a novel, a prominent Filipino writer, Rafael Palma exposed that "the regular clergy utilized the Catholic religion as an instrument of domination and prostituted it with many external ceremonies in order to give the appearance of a cult, but which actually served as a source of wealth."[5] The revolutionary movement (1880-1895) was essentially a nationalist movement based on a consciousness of a national identity - of being

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[4] Ileto, Reynaldo C., Pasyon and Revolution, Popular Movements in the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila Press, 1981, p.92.

[5] Op.Cit., p.108.

one people with beginnings to be found largely in the sharing of common grievances.

The Filipinos during the Spanish era, found themselves governed by both civil and ecclesiastical authorities up to the Revolution, due to the fact that from the onset of colonization, the country was considered a missionary territory. Thus, both Spanish soldiers and priests undertook to establish Spanish authority in he Philippine Islands. In the book, "Noli Me Tangere."[6] Jose Rizal argued that the Church was used as an instrument of domination and abuse against the Filipino people. The ambitious Spanish governors-general and archbishops started the history of power struggle among the ruling figures of the Philippines with major players from the church and the state.

THE AMERICAN ERA

The Philippine Revolution against Spain ended with a whimper, with the guerilla movement fragmenting into small bands and eventually trailing off into what the Americans called "dacoity."[7] The continued peasant-led resistance clearly embodied the more traditional expression

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[6] Translated as "Touch Me Not" written by the national hero, Jose Rizal. The book stirred national sentiment and caused his execution by the Spaniards due to its exposition of atrocities suffered by the Filipinos under the Spanish administration. A sequel to "Noli..." was "El Filibusterismo" depicting mockery of the Spanish friars. Jose Rizal's execution ignited the Philippine revolution.

[7] Steinberg, David. J., The Philippines, A Singular and a Plural Place, Westview Press, Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford, 1994.

of the Filipino hope for freedom. Unfortunately, this freedom did not come for another 45 years, as the Americans took over the country after the Spaniards left. The strength of Philippine nationalism on both the elite and the peasant levels was a factor in shaping the US policy of self-liquidating colonialism. Education, rather than religion, was the new standard banner justifying their presence.

When the Americans took control of the Philippines, they wanted the country to be self- financing, and through collection procedures and new taxes, sufficient revenues could be generated to fund the necessary infrastructure and to generate growth. Among the major sources of new revenue projected was the sale of public land. It was hoped that the expansion would generate economic capital required, while also solving the deeply entrenched problems of tenancy and share cropping. William Taft, the American Governor-General in the Philippines, went to Rome to negotiate with the Vatican, the sale of friar lands.

The United States colonial land policy was predicated on the American experience and on the belief that the Philippines was underpopulated, and that the archipelago could support many more people if public land were developed, and that the problem of tenancy would be solved by free land and universal education. Land was not merely a real estate in the Philippines, but a unique social, political and economic force.

The Americans did not impose a policy of land reform partly for political reasons - they made a deal with the elite to maintain the

existing social patterns in exchange for collaboration.[8] Since they intended to work through the existing social structure, they were unwilling to undercut the basis of the elite's wealth by striking at land ownership. The Americans believed that economic progress and education would emancipate the peasant. The US colonial practice of permitting the elite to gain power through land acquisition created a situation in which land reform was impossible because the privileged elite controlled the government and -- was the government. People at the top of the social pyramid increased their political, economic and social power at the expense of the masses in the lower strata of the Philippine society.

The 1896-1901 era was in one sense a violent discontinuity, but in another sense, can be seen as part of a process of national unification and socio-economic development that had begun earlier in the 19th century. The reality of such changes was not diminished during the interwar years (1901-1941) by the triumph of the conservative revolutionaries over the more radical and peasant activities. Even the "illustrados" (educated elites) from the Spanish period did not remain unaltered despite their clear domination during those forty years. The oligarchy expanded rapidly by absorbing the newly rich and recently educated as the nation's need for more technocrats and bureaucrats escalated. Filipinization and economic growth diffused the

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[8] Op.Cit. , p.25.

tight control of an interlocked and interrelated class substituting instead a host of subtleties sharing a common outlook but interacted in a far less concentrated way.

The Americans introduced mass education to the Filipino people and succeeded in planting the seeds of the American system into the Philippine soil. Consequently, a unique relationship developed between the two countries over the years. In July 1946, independence was finally granted by the United States and the Philippines begun its journey towards self-determination.

EFFECTS ON CULTURE

The multicultural environment and a mix of alien heritage which has influenced so much of the Philippines in the past and at present is a complex legacy. The use of Spanish and American names of persons and places are common. Consumers have an obvious preference for imported goods and commercial products made in the USA. Philippine music have strong Spanish influence, and MacDonalds has captured the market for the young.

When the Spaniards arrived, they altered the existing usage of land by establishing the European concept of private ownership, as against the local practice of communal land holding and land sharing. The colonizers assumed that the cultivators of a given parcel were also the owners - and they froze that use by conferring ownership rights, and pre-empted for the Spanish Crown all lands not specifically identified

as belonging to an individual or a village. Consequently, the Spanish friars owned big tracts of productive land in the country.

The patron-client relationship linking tenant to landlord, which the Spaniards introduced, ~~until now~~ up till the present define the reciprocal obligations of social hierarchies within the Philippine society. Hierarchies tie the lowliest peasant to the wealthiest entrepreneur. Personalism helps define decisions that otherwise would appear irrational. Smooth inter-personal relationships and hierarchal structures serve as safety lids for interaction.

The ambivalence and love-hate relationship between Filipinos and Americans had been distorting factors in a post-independence quest for a definition of Philippine nationalism. Colonial mentality[9] has somehow affected the poor and uneducated Filipino masses, and to some extent, even the elites and the educated. As a result, it has created a cultural taste in favor of foreign products perceived to be better than local ones. Contemporary activists use the term "cultural imperialism" to describe this phenomena which has subtly immersed in global advertising, and has affected not only the Philippines.

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[9] As discussed in the first footnote.

The Filipino poor, who comprise the majority situated at the bottom of the social pyramid, may seem to tolerate class prejudices, hierarchies and inequities around him. Although there had been advocacies of reform from the middle class and the educated, the fatalistic attitude of the poor has not changed much since the onset of Spanish colonization. The poor usually gain strength from collaboration with strong leaders who advocate for change.

CONCLUSION

One of the central dreams of all modern nation-states is the emergence of an integrated society in which the citizenry shares a sense of common identity and allegiance. Nations exist through the delicate balance of the coercive power of the center and the willing compliance of the citizenry. Abraham Lincoln warned that "a house divided against itself cannot stand"[10] and virtually every nation has experienced some form of civil war as the new patterns of allegiance and the priority of nationalist values have collided with other patterns. Internalizing the symbols of the modern nation state is the gradual process of national identity.[11]

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[10] Op.Cit. ,p. 37.

[11] Ibid.

The years from 1896-1902, the time of the struggle against Spain and the Philippine-American war were critical in raising the consciousness of the people and in instilling a sense of common cause and a shared heritage. The years 1941-45 tested the emerging sense of national community. From 1946 to the present, the Filipinos have enjoyed freedom and continue to build the road to true nationalism.

As for the East Timorese, the dream of independence is alive and strong and it is seen as "the only alternative for peace."[12] Most wars of national liberation, according to Jose Ramos-Horta, end in negotiations. But negotiations may not be possible unless a sense of justice and equality is recognized politically. For a subjugated and colonized people, empowerment through education may be an answer. Paolo Freire terms it "conscientization,[13]" referring to the process in which men as knowing subjects, and not as recipients nor beneficiaries, achieve a deepening awareness of the socio-cultural reality shaping their lives and learn to develop a capacity to transform such reality. Conscientization may also help to minimize dependency and colonial mentality. Therefore, in any international campaign for freedom, such as in East Timor, it is important to involve the masses and inform them of the struggle. ~~For~~ Because

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[12] Horta, Jose Ramos, Funu, The Unfinished Saga of East Timor . The Red Sea Press. New Jersey, 1987, p. 205.

[13] Freire, Paulo, Cultural Action for Freedom . Penguin Books. USA. p.51.

when freedom is finally regained, there is no better feeling than having contributed to victory.

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